

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

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V-Chip Use Doubles to 42 Percent - Markey Praises New Survey of Parents

Washington, DC – Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), author of the V-Chip law requiring all television sets to come equipped with technology that allows parents to block programs based on content ratings, today praised the Kaiser Family Foundation for its continuing attention to violence and sexual content in the media. The Foundation released its latest national survey of parents today – *Parents, Media and Public Policy* – noting that use of the V-Chip has increased substantially since 2001. About four in 10 (42 percent) of those who report having a V-Chip-equipped TV now report using it, compared to just 17 percent in 2001. Among all parents (including those who are unaware of or do not have a V-chip in their TV), the number has jumped from just 7 percent in 2001 to 15 percent today. Nearly two-thirds (61 percent) of parents who have used the V-Chip say they found it “very” useful.

“Considering how little time and effort has been spent by the TV manufacturers and retailers in advertising this feature to parents,” said Markey, “this is a healthy proportion of the target audience for the V-Chip. It indicates that this technology is a welcome addition to the tools parents use when trying to manage the flood of sexual and violent content to which children are exposed through the media.”

The Foundation also notes that a majority of parents continue to say they are “very” concerned about the amount of sex (60 percent) and violence (53 percent) their children are exposed to on TV. Vicky Rideout, Vice President and Director of the Kaiser Family Foundation’s Program for the Study of Entertainment Media and Health, stressed today that “while many parents have used the ratings or the V-Chip, too many still don’t know what the ratings mean or even that their TV includes a V-Chip,” she added.

Rep. Markey noted that some media outlets had recently taken constructive steps to air more public service announcements regarding ratings and the V-Chip, more needs to be done. For example, the cable industry has agreed to block television channels free-of-charge at customers’ request. “Clearly the use of the V-chip can be raised if the awareness of the chip is raised, and if we can reduce confusion over how to use the V-Chip and over how to interpret the ratings themselves. I urge all forms of media to study this important survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation and consider how they can help parents cope with the persistent and corrosive messages received everyday to children over the air, through the cable, and through the proliferation of new technology.”